

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

BURT-STARK MANSION

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Page 1**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **BURT-STARK MANSION**

Other Name/Site Number: Burt-Stark House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 306 North Main and Greenville Streets

Not for publication: _____

City/Town: Abbeville

Vicinity: _____

State: South Carolina County: Abbeville Code: 001

Zip Code: 29620

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: _____	Building(s): <u>X</u>
Public-local: <u>X</u>	District: _____
Public-State: _____	Site: _____
Public-Federal: _____	Structure: _____
	Object: _____

Number of Resources within Property	
Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic Site of President Jefferson Davis's final council of war	Sub:
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Current:	Historic House Museum	Sub:
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7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:
Greek Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Brick
Walls:	Wood
Roof:	Cedar shingles, asphalt shingles, tin, and aluminum
Other:	

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Page 4**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****A. CONSTRUCTION**

The Burt-Stark Mansion was built in the 1830s by David Lesley, lawyer, planter, judge, and elder in the Presbyterian Church. The structure is said to be patterned on a house the Lesleys saw on a trip north, and, according to family lore, its construction was supervised by Cubic, a slave and master carpenter. It is reported that Cubic was sent north on horseback to study the house seen by the Lesleys before beginning construction.

B. DESCRIPTION

A two-story white frame structure with lap-siding, the house is Greek Revival in style. Four square columns support a pedimented front portico, two stories high and extending across the central section of the house. Ornamental supports are entablature features. Beneath the pediment is a small second-story balcony with wooden latticework. A floor-height window opens onto the main portico on either side of the front door. The shutters on these and all windows are original. In addition to the imposing front entrance, simpler entrances with piazzas open on the south and rear elevations of the house. The corners of the house are accented by pilasters. Square chimneys have paneled sides. Of the original separate buildings--which included carriage house, smokehouse, well house, cow barn, milk house and kitchen--only the kitchen remains. This building, with its large brick fireplace and iron crane for cooking utensils, is in good condition.

Characterizing the interior are high ceilings and spacious rooms. The main entrance is a central great hall with an Adam fanlight. A drawing room opens on each side. In antebellum times, the wide double doors to each of these rooms permitted use of the entire front area as a ballroom.

The drawing room, opening off the hall to the left on entering, is the one in which the fateful May 2, 1865, meeting between Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge and senior military officers took place.

The most significant upstairs bedrooms are the ones located in the northeast and the northwest corners of the house. The former was used by President Davis in 1865 and the latter by Mrs. Mary Stark Davis, who in 1971 donated her historic house to "a properly formed public body so as to preserve it for future generations." In 1976 "Miss Mary" donated the furnishings as well. Mrs. Davis' bedroom is furnished as it was at the time of her death in 1987 at the age of 102.

In the early 20th century, the Starks made two additions to the house, the only additions to it. They are a single-story wing at the northwest corner at the rear of the house, which has been extended to provide additional kitchen space; and the addition of a bathroom at the rear of the second floor hall.

Craft characteristics of the builder show up consistently in the wood trim, design of doors and other architectural features. All floors--wide boards of heart pine--are original, as are the simply carved mantels. The two drawing rooms and the dining room feature central ceiling medallions and original crystal chandeliers. The drawing room doors are fitted with heavy silver hinges imported from Great Britain. At the rear of the central hall, a narrow-railed staircase rises to a broad landing.

The mansion is in excellent condition, both on the interior and exterior, and, except for the two aforementioned changes to the rear of the structure and the addition of modern utilities, is unchanged. The noncontributing structure is a garage dating to the 1930s.

Mary Stark Davis inherited the house and lot from her parents and in 1971 agreed to donate the house and lot to the community. To this end, the Abbeville County Historic Preservation

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Commission was established and its members appointed by South Carolina Governor Robert McNair at the recommendation of the Abbeville legislative delegation.

C. THE FURNISHINGS

The house is furnished with Southern antiques of the antebellum era, many of which date to the 1850s and 1860s. These include furniture, silver, crystal, rugs, and miniatures and family portraits in elaborately carved gold-leaf frames. Also in gold leaf are floor-to-ceiling pier mirrors and window valances. A first-floor bedroom and four upstairs bedrooms are furnished in the early 19th-century mode. Marble-topped dressers, hand-carved chests, and tester beds with hand-made coverings are typical. The desk of the home's first owner stands in the upstairs hall. The dining room with its petticoat mirrors and plantation hunt board recalls the hospitality for which the house and its owners were noted. Much of the charm of the house lies in the authenticity of its furnishings.

D. THE GROUNDS

The gardens were designed in the 1830s by an English landscaper named Johnson. The narrow entrance driveway, originally a carriage road, circles before the front steps. Here an old dismount stone stands. Remaining from the original landscaping, boxwood-bordered walks extend from the broad piazzas at the side and rear of the house. The house and grounds are shaded by tall oaks, magnolias, and cedars. Plantings include oleanders, wygelia, wisteria, and other old-fashioned shrubs and flowers.

E. THE OWNERS

The Burt-Stark Mansion, although almost 170 years old, has had only seven owners. Upon David Lesley's death in 1855, the property was acquired by the Rev. Thomas A. Hoyt, pastor of the Upper Long Cane Presbyterian Church. In 1859, he was called to a Louisville, Kentucky, church, and he sold the house to Andrew Simonds, a Charleston banker, who was married to a cousin of John C. Calhoun.

In 1862 Simonds sold the property to Armistead Burt, whose wife was Martha Calhoun, one of John Calhoun's nieces. Born at Clouds Creek, in the Edgefield District of South Carolina, on November 13, 1802, Armistead moved as a child with his parents to Pendleton, where he completed his education, read law and was admitted to the South Carolina bar in 1823. Burt relocated to Abbeville five years later. There he continued his law practice and became a planter. He was elected to and represented the Abbeville District in the South Carolina house of representatives in 1834-35 and 1838-41. He was elected as a Democrat, representing the 7th South Carolina District, to the 28th and the four succeeding Congresses (March 4, 1843-March 3, 1853). He and Jefferson Davis were House colleagues in the 29th Congress. He was chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs in the 31st and 32nd Congresses, and was speaker *pro tempore* of the House during the absence of Speaker Robert C. Winthrop in 1848. He declined to stand for reelection in 1852 and resumed his Abbeville law practice.

Subsequent to the Civil War, Burt was a delegate to the 1868 Democratic National Convention. He died in Abbeville on October 30, 1883, and is buried in the Trinity Episcopal Cemetery. Some 15 years before his death, Burt and his wife were faced with bankruptcy and compelled to sell at auction their house and most of its furnishings. They sold the house and lot in 1868 to James R. Norwood, a local planter. He died in 1875, and the house was occupied successively by his widow, Sarah Wester Norwood, and his daughter Sarah Norwood Calhoun. In 1900 Mrs. Calhoun sold the property to James Samuel Stark, a banker and planter. He and his wife Ann Miller Stark--a niece of Martha Calhoun Burt--restored the house and grounds as an Abbeville showplace. Mrs. Stark and her twin daughters--Fannie and Mary--were socially prominent. On the death of her parents, Mary Stark Davis inherited the property.

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F. INTERPRETING THE HOUSE AND GROUNDS

Since Mrs. Davis's death in the autumn of 1987 the Abbeville Historic Preservation Commission has administered the Burt-Stark Mansion as a historic house museum. The house is open to visitation on Saturday afternoons from 1 to 5 and by appointment at other times. The interpretive tours led by Mrs. Margaret Flynn Bowie and other docents focus on President Davis and his last council of war, the architectural history of the house and its furnishings, and the social history of the area as represented by the life styles of the Burts, the Starks, and Miss Mary Stark Davis.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X
Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B X C ___ D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Theme(s): VI. The Civil War
C. War in the West
E. Political and Diplomatic Scene

Areas of Significance: Military/Political
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: April 17-May 2, 1865

Significant Dates: April 17-May 2, 1865

Significant Person(s): Jefferson Davis
John C. Breckinridge
Gen. Braxton Bragg

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Cubic, a slave

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form **Page 8****State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

National Historic Landmark criterion 1 reads: "That are associated with events that have been made a significant contribution to, and are identified with or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained."

The Burt-Stark Mansion meets criterion 1 because of the momentous meeting that took place in the southeast parlor--now known as the Meeting Room--between 4 and 6 p.m. on May 2, 1865. This meeting struck the death knell of the Confederacy. Although Richmond had been evacuated thirty days before, Gen. Robert E. Lee had surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House on April 9, and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston had surrendered Confederate forces in his Department of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida on April 26 at the Bennett House, near Durham Station, North Carolina, President Davis was determined to continue the struggle for an independent Confederacy. He planned to rally the troops in Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor's Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana, cross the Mississippi, and join with his still numerous forces there.

Davis, despite the bitter news and the departure for their homes by certain members of his Cabinet on the journey from Charlotte into South Carolina, was steadfast in this resolve when he reached Abbeville and took up quarters in the Burt House in the morning of May 2. His mind was changed in the meeting that he convened in the southwest parlor of the Burt House at 4 p.m.

Dr. William Cooper--professor of History at Louisiana State University, Davis biographer, and distinguished member of the Civil War Sites Study Commission--is familiar with the Burt-Stark Mansion and the meeting and its significance. When asked to evaluate what occurred at this meeting, Dr. Cooper stated on April 6, 1992:

The final Confederate council of war occurred on May 2, 1865, in the Burt House in Abbeville, South Carolina. President Jefferson Davis met with Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge, General Braxton Bragg, and five cavalry commanders. Speaking optimistically about Confederate hopes, Davis requested advice from his subordinates about future military plans. They responded that continued resistance was impossible, that the war was over. This unanimous opinion caused Davis finally to recognize that all was lost.

This recognition on Davis's part resulted in the prompt dissolution of the remainder of his Cabinet, the disbanding of his 3,000-man military escort, and the dispersal of the Confederate gold bullion and specie. It freed those parts of the Confederacy south and west of the Chattahoochee River and the trans-Mississippi from the threat of bitter partisan warfare. The Burt House meeting signaled to all that President Davis, who had heretofore demonstrated an inflexible resolve, finally had decided that the cause was lost. Taking their cue from Davis, all Confederate forces in the field had laid down their arms by June 24. Before the end of the month, the Confederate raider *Shenandoah* in the far-off Bering Sea, learning of the military collapse of the South, ceased her attacks on United States whalers and shaped a course for Liverpool.

National Historic Landmark criterion 2 reads: "That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States."

The Burt-Stark Mansion meets criterion 2 because the meeting that took place there was critically important in the careers of three nationally significant individuals--Jefferson Davis, John C. Breckinridge, and Braxton Bragg.

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Jefferson Davis--Mexican war hero, Member of the House of Representatives, U.S. Senator, able Secretary of War, Confederate President, and enduring symbol of the "Lost Cause"--is closely associated with other National Historic Landmarks. Among these are the Alabama State Capitol, Beauvoir, and the White House of the Confederacy. But the event that took place in the Burt-Stark Mansion, as will be documented in the following narrative, had a pivotal role in convincing President Davis that further military resistance was hopeless.

John C. Breckinridge, in the years before the May 2, 1865, meeting, had been a lawyer, distinguished orator, Member of the House of Representatives and U.S. Senator from Kentucky, the youngest Vice President of the United States (1857-1861), candidate of the Southern wing of the Democratic party for President in 1860, Confederate general, and the Confederate Secretary of War. He played the key role at the May 2 meeting in convincing Jefferson Davis that further resistance was hopeless. Except for the battlefields on which he fought there are no National Historic Landmarks associated with Breckinridge.

Braxton Bragg, a Mexican War hero, commanded the South's second most important army from mid-June 1862 until the end of November 1863. While in command he led the army in the Kentucky Campaign, the Battle of Stones River, the Tullahoma Campaign, and the Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Sites associated with two of these are units of the National Park System and a third a National Historic Landmark. During 1864, Bragg was President Davis's key military advisor. Bragg and Breckinridge, both present at the meeting, had no use for one another.

II. NARRATIVE

A. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS FAMILY FLEE RICHMOND

By late March 1865, the Confederacy faced disaster. Winter had ended and Gen. Robert E. Lee's army found itself increasingly hard pressed to hold the more than 35 miles of earthworks extending from Chickahominy Bluffs northeast of Richmond to the Claiborne Road, seven miles southwest of Petersburg. Food and forage were increasingly hard to come by and desertion mounted. Then Lee's attempt to batter the Federals and gain time for an orderly evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg had misfired at Fort Stedman, on March 25. One hundred and twenty-five miles south of Petersburg, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's columns, after defeating Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's outnumbered Confederates at Bentonville, North Carolina (March 19-21), had marched to Goldsboro, where on the 23rd they had rendezvoused with Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield's divisions that had thrust inland from Wilmington and New Bern.

Confronted by these grim realities, General Lee on March 26 informed President Jefferson Davis "I fear now it will be impossible to prevent a junction between Grant and Sherman, nor do I deem it prudent that this army should maintain its position until ... [Sherman] shall approach too near."¹

Davis, thus alerted by General Lee that the evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg was imminent, took his wife, Varina; her sister "Maggie" Howell; their four children; three slaves; and the daughters of Secretary of the Treasury George Trenholm to the railroad depot. Their escort was Burton Harrison, the President's Virginia-born and Yale-educated secretary. Their destination was Charlotte, where they arrived on April 4, two days after the evacuation of Richmond.²

Sunday, April 2, 1865, was a dark day. On Saturday, Union troops had crushed a detached Confederate command at Five Forks.

At 4 a.m., Grant had launched an all-out assault on the Petersburg defenses. A major breakthrough by the Sixth Corps heralded disaster, and General Lee notified President Davis that "it is absolutely necessary that we should abandon our position to-night...."³

By midnight, President Davis and his Cabinet, other senior government officials, and hundreds of other refugees had fled Richmond aboard locomotives and cars of the Richmond & Danville Railroad. They carried with them the Confederate treasury and archives. General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, driven from the Petersburg lines that it had so gallantly held since mid-June 1864, was in rapid retreat westward. Davis looked upon the loss of Richmond and Petersburg as disasters, but not as the end of the Confederacy's chance for independence.

B. FROM DANVILLE TO CHARLOTTE WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY

At Danville, Virginia, on the morning of April 3, Davis established a temporary capital and anxiously awaited the arrival of Lee's army. But such was not to be. The failure to stockpile rations and forage at Amelia Court House cost Lee his headstart, and Lt. Gen. U.S. Grant and his generals pushed their men to the limits of their endurance in pursuing Lee; they were moving in

¹ Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York, 1934-35), IV: 20; and Freeman, *Lee's Dispatches* (New York, 1915), pp. 345-46.

² Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis, Ex-president of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by His Wife* (Charlotte, 1897), II: 455, 461.

³ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: 1880-1901), Ser. 1, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1265.

for the *coup de gras*. Additional Confederate disasters--Sayler's Creek (April 6) and the loss of High Bridge (April 7)--brought Lee and Grant to their Palm Sunday date with destiny in Wilmer McLean's parlor at Appomattox Court House.

On Monday, the 10th, President Davis received the bitter news that General Lee had surrendered. But he was undaunted. The Confederacy, as he saw it, still had some blue chips. Some 130 miles to the southeast at Smithfield, North Carolina, was Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army group. In Alabama there were Lt. Gens. Richard Taylor and Nathan Bedford Forrest and their commands, while, in the vast Trans-Mississippi, Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith possessed formidable resources of men and material. And there was an intangible asset---Davis's will to persevere. The next day, Davis employed the iron horse to move to Greensboro, where he would be nearer Johnston's headquarters. Davis remained at Greensboro until April 15. During this time he was joined by Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge. He also met with Gens. Joseph E. Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard to review the situation as it affected Johnston's army, which, in the face of the rapid advance of Sherman's "army group" from Goldsboro, had evacuated Raleigh on April 12, and was regrouping in and around Hillsboro. After sanctioning Johnston's proposal to approach Sherman with a request for suspension of hostilities between their armies, Davis, on the morning of the 15th, rode out of Greensboro en route to Charlotte. He was accompanied by senior members of the government and a mounted unit led by Brig. Gen. George Dibrell.

The North Carolina roads were ribbons of mud, and it took the presidential party--traveling by way of Lexington, Salisbury, and Concord--five days to reach Charlotte. While Davis's caravan crawled southwestward, Sherman and Johnston, meeting at the Bennett farm house, on April 16-18, had reached an agreement calling for an armistice by all armies in the field: Confederate forces to be disbanded and to deposit their arms in state arsenals; the President of the United States to recognize the existing state governments in the South when their officials took oaths of allegiance to the United States, etc. But the assassination of Lincoln and his death at 7:22 a.m., April 15, had doomed the acceptance by President Andrew Johnson of the liberal terms accorded the Confederacy by the Sherman-Johnston "Memorandum or basis of agreement."

On April 24, General Grant reached Sherman's Raleigh headquarters with word of the President's rejection of those terms, and orders for Sherman to give 48-hours notice and then resume hostilities if Johnston did not surrender. Yet unknown to Grant and Sherman, President Davis, still at Charlotte, had that day approved the April 18 Memorandum. On April 26, Sherman and Johnston returned to the Bennett House, where terms for the surrender of the troops under Johnston's command were agreed to and signed in accordance with the formula established at Appomattox Court House, 17 days before.

C. MRS. DAVIS'S TRAVELS AND HER ELEVEN DAYS AS GUEST OF THE BURTS

President Davis's wife, Varina, and the children had left Charlotte on April 11, the day her husband reached Greensboro. She traveled with Capt. James H. Parker's 150 sailors and marines, who had left Richmond on the night of April 2 with the Confederate treasury's specie. One of the midshipmen was Mrs. Davis's brother Jefferson. They rode the cars of the Charlotte & South Carolina Railroad to Chester, South Carolina, but beyond that pleasant courthouse town the fugitives must travel by wagon. At Chester, Varina found a number of old friends among the refugees--Gen. John B. Hood, Brig. Gens. John S. Preston and James Chesnut, and Senator Clement Clay of Alabama.⁴

⁴ Ishbel Ross, *First Lady of the South: The Life of Mrs. Jefferson Davis* (New York, 1958), p. 227; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender* (New York, 1985), pp. 72-3; Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, edited by C. Vann Woodward (New York, 1981), pp. 783-86; and Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, II, 610-11. Burton Harrison did not accompany Mrs. Davis and her party when they left Charlotte, as he had returned to Danville and joined the presidential party.

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While Parker and his people transferred the treasure from the cars into wagons for the next stage of the flight, Mrs. Davis dined with General Chesnut and his wife, Mary, the diarist who had been one of Varina's social set in wartime Richmond. Mrs. Chesnut noted in her diary that they discussed the loss of Richmond and exchanged snippets of such news as they had heard. Varina was "calm and smiling," but the situation had so changed that a member of the staff did not rise when she entered the room. "There were people here so base as to be afraid to befriend Mrs. Davis," Mrs. Chesnut observed, and when Varina had departed she was laughed at for making such a fuss about the "Royal Family in Exile."

Just before saying tearful goodbyes to her friends in Chester, Varina penciled a hurried note to her husband. Though she felt "wordless, helpless," she wrote, she felt a sense of security traveling with Parker and the treasure train. She was uncertain of her current destination, but it would be either Abbeville, South Carolina, or Washington, Georgia. She closed with, "Would to God I could know the truth of the horrible rumors I hear of you. One is that you have started for Gen. Lee, but have never been heard of."⁵

It was near nightfall on the 12th, when the treasure wagons left Chester. Mrs. Davis, her children, and two servants rode in an ambulance. The caravan traveled by way of Woodward Baptist Church, Captain Parker and his sailors and marines keeping a sharp lookout for Union cavalry. For the rest of her long life, Mrs. Davis would remember this trip over muddy roads, her family huddled in the ambulance, their personal belongings in a wagon, and the drivers trying to keep within sight of the treasure train and its guards ahead. The ambulance was overloaded, and Varina got out and "walked five miles in the darkness in mud over my shoe tops, with my cheerful little baby in my arms."

On April 16, they reached Newberry, a station on the Columbia & Greenville Railroad and west of the region through which Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's troops had cut a swath of destruction less than two months before. While Parker's men transferred the treasure from wagons to boxcars, the fugitives read a local newspaper which rejected the stories that Gen. Robert E. Lee and his army had surrendered and declared them to be "an unmitigated falsehood of the enemy." Traveling by way of Cokesbury, where the locomotive and cars were switched onto a spur line, the caravan reached Abbeville, where John C. Calhoun had practiced law and entered politics. The handsome county seat town was abloom with roses and flowering vines, which clung to fences and chimneys. Varina arrived "More dead than alive," but found a "welcome ... as warm as though we had something to confer." She was now among the first secessionists. She was greeted by Col. Armistead Burt, an old friend from the days when Jefferson Davis first entered Congress in December 1845. Mrs. Burt was a niece of John C. Calhoun.⁶

When Varina told Burt that the Yankees might burn his mansion if he gave her shelter, he replied, "Madam, I know of no better use my house could be put to than to be burned for such a cause." Varina, her family, and servants took up quarters in the Burt house. Writing her husband from the Burt mansion on April 19, Varina reported that "Jeffy D." had been quite sick on the cars and was staying across the street with Mrs. Helen Trenholm. The children were now well and happy and romped and played all day. Billy and Jim Limber were good friends, and

⁵ Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, pp. 783-86; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 73-4; Ross, *First Lady of the South*, pp. 227-28.

⁶ Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, II: 611-12; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 74-75; Ross, *First Lady of the South*, pp. 228-29.

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Winnie was "the sweetest little angelic thing in the world--she rode along in the wagon as we bumped over the horrible roads, making noses at everything."⁷

After learning of President Lincoln's assassination, Jefferson Davis sent his secretary, Burton Harrison, to Abbeville to escort Varina and his children into the deep south, and to apprise her of all that this and what the impending surrender of the Confederate forces under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston portended. Varina, while at the Burts' house, had read in the *Press and Banner* of Lincoln's murder. As she remembered it, "I burst into tears, the first I had shed, which flowed from the mingling of sorrow for the family of Mr. Lincoln, and a thorough realization of the inevitable results to the Confederates, now that they were at the mercy of the Federals."⁸

Varina wrote her husband on April 28, imploring that he not attempt to join her, "unless I happen to cross your shortest path to your bourne, be that what it may." Much more quickly than her husband, Varina sensed that the Lincoln assassination endangered Davis's life. She feared that the radicals would seize on Lincoln's death as a "divine rebuke" to those who advocated leniency toward the Confederacy and its leaders.

She asked her husband's approval of her plans for continuing her flight, though they were confused and shifting. She could go to Washington, Georgia, then perhaps to Atlanta, or to Florida for passage to England. She might join the President in Texas, with their two youngest children "and that is the prospect which bears me up, to be once more with you" She entrusted this letter to Col. Henry Leovy, who met her husband on May 1 on the Saluda River.⁹

D. MRS. DAVIS BIDS FAREWELL TO THE BURTS

Although Harrison and the Burts sought to persuade her to remain longer among her Abbeville friends, she declined. On the morning of April 29, the day after Harrison's arrival, she bade farewell to the hospitable Burts and departed Abbeville. She, her children, and servants rode in a wagon. They were accompanied by Harrison and an escort of young Kentucky horse soldiers who were on sick leave--among them Lt. Winder Monroe, a Lt. Messick, and a

⁷ Ross, *First Lady of the South*, pp. 229-30; Mrs. Varina Davis to Jefferson Davis, April 19, 1865, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va.

⁸ Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, II: 615.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 614-15; Ross, *First Lady of the South*, p. 232.

Lt. Hathaway, with the latter of whom Varina's sister, Maggie, fell in love.¹⁰

Near the Savannah River, they encountered Captain Parker and the treasure train, which they had last seen 12 days before. On Monday, April 17, after transferring the specie from boxcars to wagons, the treasure train and its escort headed out of Abbeville. Parker and his people crossed the Savannah River at Vienna en route to Macon, Georgia. But at Washington, on the 19th, Parker had his orders changed and proceeded to Augusta, where, on the 20th, the money was placed in bank vaults, but the authorities refused to accept responsibility for the gold and silver. The local authorities feared Confederates irregulars more than Yankee cavalry, now that there were large numbers of disbanded and disillusioned Rebel veterans wandering about the countryside hungry and penniless.

Parker was dismayed by a telegraphic order from Secretary Mallory, instructing him to disband his corps of midshipmen and marines. Loath to obey this order and abandon the treasure, Parker and his men returned to Washington on the 28th, and, on the 29th, retraced their steps to the Savannah River, crossing and going on toward Abbeville with their "onerous burden," hoping to turn it over to President Davis, who at this time had with him only two boxes of gold coin, valued at \$35,000.

Parker and his wagons arrived back in Abbeville on the evening of April 29 and stored the specie in a warehouse. Some 20 hours later, on Tuesday, May 2--the cry, "The Yankees are Coming!" was raised, and the sailors and marines hurriedly packed the treasure, this time in cars on a train bound for Newberry. But just as the locomotive was building up steam and the train was ready to depart, armed riders approached Abbeville--but to Parker's relief, they were recognized as the vanguard of President Davis's escort.¹¹

E. FROM CHARLOTTE TO COKESBURY WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY

On April 26, President Davis and his Cabinet rode out of Charlotte headed south. They were accompanied by a strong mounted escort, numbering two to three thousand cavalry organized into five demi-brigades led by Brig. Gens. John Vaughn, a "brave and earnest" Tennessean; Samuel W. Ferguson, a West Pointer from South Carolina and a Davis favorite; Basil Duke, one of the late John Hunt Morgan's "terrible men;" George Dibrell, who had cut his teeth as a cavalryman under Bedford Forrest; and Col. W.C.P. Breckinridge, a hard-riding Kentuckian and the Secretary of War's cousin, who had succeeded to leadership of "Cerro Gordo" Williams' command. At the head of the horse soldiers rode John C. Breckinridge, who wore two hats, one as Secretary of War and the other as major general.

Capt. Watson Van Benthuisen, President Davis's nephew, was in charge of the men guarding the five-wagon baggage train. Among the guards were two of Van Benthuisen's brothers--Alfred and Jefferson Davis--and five young bluebloods from Maryland's Eastern Shore. Also in the guard were two scouts detailed from Capt. Gwen Campbell's Kentucky Cavalry Company. In addition, there were five slaves, including Watson, the President's cook. Although the situation, following General Johnston's surrender, was bleak, President Davis proposed to enjoy his accustomed comforts.¹²

¹⁰ Ross, *First Lady of the South*, p. 233; Burton N. Harrison, narrative, Burton Harrison Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹ Ross, *First Lady of the South*, p. 234; Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, II: 616; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 113-14; Michael B. Ballard, *A Long Shadow: Jefferson Davis and the Final Days of the Confederacy* (Jackson, 1986), pp. 110-11, 124.

¹² Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 111-13; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 96-97; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge, 1974), p. 518; Basil W. Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," in Robert Underwood and Clarence C. Buel, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York,

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Even before the long column mounted up, the dissolution of the Cabinet commenced when Attorney General George Davis of North Carolina resigned. Soon after crossing into South Carolina some 17 miles beyond Charlotte, the head of the caravan approached Fort Mill, where Davis spent the night in the home of Col. A.B. Springs, a local planter. The next morning, the 27th, Davis and his Cabinet met on the lawn fronting the William E. White mansion and discussed what route they should take. It was decided to continue to bear southwest, pass through Georgia and rendezvous with Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor's Army somewhere north of Mobile. When the Cabinet prepared to push on, Secretary of the Treasury George A. Trenholm pled ill health, resigned, and went his own way.¹³

Davis named Postmaster General John H. Reagan as Trenholm's successor. Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, with his cheshire-like grim, cautioned, "I believe you will find it unconstitutional for him to hold both places at once."

When Reagan objected to the added responsibilities, Davis joked, "You can look after that without much trouble ... there's not much for the Secretary of Treasury to do. There's but little money left for him to steal."

The Catawba River was crossed on a ferry at Nation's Ford. The caravan stopped at York, 12 miles south of the Revolutionary War battlefield of Kings Mountain, where the "over mountain" men had thrashed Maj. Patrick Ferguson and his Tories. Davis and a few others spent the night of the 27th in the home of Dr. James Bratton. The President's wardrobe was so scant that he was compelled to borrow a nightshirt from one of the doctor's neighbors.

At York, Capt. Given Campbell and his cavalry company were encountered. Campbell and his troopers were tasked to escort the President and the remaining Cabinet members, and then the cavalcade hastened on toward Scarfe's Ferry on Broad River. Dusk on the 28th found the presidential party stopping at a house some distance short of the river. Davis and Breckinridge passed the evening in conversation on the porch, while Postmaster General Reagan of Texas and Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory of Florida tossed "silver half dollars for five cents 'Eleven Up'" in the garden.¹⁴

At sunup on the 29th, the President crossed Broad River at Pinchersville Ferry, and the column turned into the Unionville road. That night Davis slept in Unionville at the home of Brig. Gen. William H. Wallace, who had not yet returned from the war. Davis and Breckinridge, as they traveled through South Carolina, breakfasted with the troops, and Reagan and Mallory, as well as Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, mingled with the cavalrymen, boosting morale. The rank and file, from what they saw, were satisfied that Davis, if he so desired, could escape abroad; Mallory, Reagan, and Breckinridge could do so without difficulty; but rotund Benjamin, obviously unaccustomed to life in the field, had, in their view, little chance to get out of the country. Ironically, Benjamin did escape, as did Breckinridge.

In the southern part of Union County, the presidential party slept the last night of April in Lafayette (Fate) Young's home, south of Martin's Depot. There Davis encountered Colonel Leovy with the letters addressed to him by Varina and Burton Harrison before their April 29 departure from Abbeville. On May 1 they crossed the muddy Saluda River at Puckett's Ferry, nine miles northeast of Greenwood. That night was spent at Cokesbury, the hometown of two

1884-86), IV: 763-64.

¹³ Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 118-19. George Trenholm and his wife had spent the night of April 26 in the home of William E. White.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 103-04, 105-06; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, pp. 518-19.

Confederate brigadier generals--Martin W. Gray and his hard-drinking cousin Nathan "Shanks" Evans.¹⁵

There they were joined by Gen. Braxton Bragg, who until a few days before had commanded a scattering of troops in North Carolina. Bragg walked up to Davis, cuffed his hat, and, after a brief conversation, strode over to where Breckinridge stood. As he spoke with the Secretary of War, Bragg stood before him hat in hand. Bragg's deference to Breckinridge was in marked contrast to his treatment of the latter in the days following the battles of Stones River (Dec. 31, 1862-Jan. 2, 1863) and Missionary Ridge (Nov. 25, 1863). After the first he had held Breckinridge responsible for the January 2 repulse and after the second accused the Kentuckian of being drunk.¹⁶

F. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY REACH ABBEVILLE

The column left Cokesbury soon after sunup on May 2 en route to Abbeville, where Mrs. Davis and her party had spent the days from April 17 to 29. The President and Postmaster General Reagan were riding together in advance of the column as they entered the town. Davis reined up in front of a cabin and asked the woman of the house for a drink of water. As he drank, a baby crawled across the porch and down the steps. The woman, who had been staring at Davis, said, "Ain't you President Davis?" "Yes, I am," he replied. Nodding toward the toddler, she remarked, "He's named for you."

Davis took a gold coin from his pocket and handed it to her, and stated, "Please keep this for him, and tell him about it when he's old enough to understand." As they rode on, Davis told Reagan, "That's the last coin I have to my name," and "I wouldn't have had that but for the fact that I've never seen one like it, and kept it for luck."

He then told Reagan, with a rueful smile, "My [Brierfield] home is a wreck, Benjamin's and Breckinridge's are in Federal hands, Mallory's at Pensacola has been burned by the enemy, your house in Texas has been wrecked...."¹⁷

G. PRESIDENT DAVIS TAKES UP QUARTERS WITH THE BURTS

Secretary of War Breckinridge had preceded the President and, upon entering Abbeville, took up quarters along with the other members of the Cabinet at the home of James Perrin; Preston Johnston and other staffers lodged with the Leovys. Expecting to stay a while, the drivers unloaded their wagons, bathed and changed clothes. Davis went to the home of his long-time friend Armistead Burt, where he was given a welcome and shown to his room, the same room where his wife had stayed several nights before. He had known Burt since their service in the 29th Congress. Breckinridge took prompt measures to insure their security when the flight was

¹⁵ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 106; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 519; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 120-21.

¹⁶ William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 519; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 120-21; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 106-07.

¹⁷ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 112-113; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 121; Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 764. Burton Harrison described Abbeville as "a beautiful place, on high ground, [where] the people lived in great comfort, their houses embowered in vines and roses, with many flowers everywhere." Enthusiasm for secession in 1860 had swept western South Carolina as it had other areas of the state. In Abbeville, in November 1860 following Abraham Lincoln's election as 16th President, a huge pro-secession rally had assembled on what has since been known as Secession Hill.

resumed, by sending Ferguson's brigade out the Vienna road to take post near the Savannah River ponton bridge.¹⁸

H. PRESIDENT DAVIS PRESIDES AT HIS LAST COUNCIL OF WAR

At 4 p.m., after resting several hours, President Davis called a "council of war" to meet in the Burt House's parlor. The participants sat around a table, Davis at the head, with Breckinridge on his left and Bragg on his right. Also seated at the table were Generals Duke, Ferguson, Dibrell, and Vaughn, and Colonel Breckinridge. Davis had turned to his generals rather than the three remaining members of his Cabinet. The reason was obvious, because it was apparent to the President that the trio--Benjamin, Reagan, and Mallory--had no desire to prolong the war. Secretary of War Breckinridge, unlike his colleagues, wore at this council of war, the last held in the Confederacy, the hat of a general officer. Capt. William H. Parker, who had returned to Abbeville only hours ahead of Presidential cavalcade with the treasure train, was certain that all but the Secretary of War had the air of wishing to be gone. "General Breckinridge," he noted, "presented his usual bold cavalier manner." General Duke was satisfied that of all the Cabinet members, only Breckinridge "knew what was going on, what was going to be done, and what ought to be done."¹⁹

Davis opened the council with small talk, as was his habit. Studying the President, the swashbuckling Duke thought he had

never seen Mr. Davis look better or show to better advantage. He seemed in excellent spirits and humor; and the union of dignity, graceful affability, and decision, which made his manner usually so striking, was very marked in his reception of us.

Having steeled himself for a supreme effort to breath life into the all-but-dead Confederacy, Davis turned to the subject for which he had called them together. "It is time, that we adopt some definite plan upon which further prosecution of our struggle shall be conducted." But he added, "I feel that I ought to do nothing now without the advice of my military chiefs." Duke saw the irony in the President's words, and thought

such a term addressed to a handful of brigadiers, commanding altogether barely three thousand men, by one who so recently had been the master of legions, was pleasantry, yet he said it in a way that made it a compliment.²⁰

¹⁸ Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 121-22; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 519; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 114, 116-17. The Leovys, originally from New Orleans, had refugeeed to Abbeville and rented a house in the town. A Perrin daughter recalled that:

We were expecting Federals at the time, and, at first thought Mr. Davis and his men belonged to the Federal army, but as soon as we saw Mr. Mallory, we knew from his uniform that they were Confederates. Messrs. Breckinridge and Benjamin were well dressed. Messrs. Mallory and Reagan looked as if they had been meeting with the hardships of war. Messrs. Breckinridge, Mallory and Reagan seemed to realize that a great calamity had befallen the Confederacy but Mr. Benjamin was more jovial and did not seem depressed. The last named spent a good while out in the garden admiring the flowers. Hannah Clark Perrin, "Memories of Historic Old Abbeville, During the War Between the States," files Burt-Stark House; *Abbeville Medium*, May 22, 1884.

¹⁹ Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 122; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, pp. 519-20; Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 764; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 117. Some versions of the meeting hold that other Cabinet members were also present, but the most reliable identify only Breckinridge. The character of the retreat since the President had left Charlotte on April 26 had changed. Now military considerations predominated, and none of the other Cabinet members possessed any expertise in that arena.

²⁰ Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 764.

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Each brigade commander, beginning with the senior, then reported on the strength and condition of his unit. Whereupon, Davis repeated his familiar refrain--that the cause was

not lost any more than hope of American liberty was gone amid the sorest trials and disheartening reverses of the Revolutionary struggle; but that energy, courage, and constancy might yet save us.

If the loyal and stalwart soldiers would rally to the cause, they could still win the South's freedom.

Even if the troops now with me be all that I can for the present rely on, three thousand brave men are enough for a nucleus around which the whole people will rally when the panic which now afflicts them has passed away.²¹

Davis next called on his generals for suggestions as to how they should continue the war. An embarrassing silence followed, as the officers exchanged glances. Duke now spoke, and allowed that they had given up all hope of victory, an admission that was the more impressive because of their sympathy for the President. As Duke recalled, "Our respect for Mr. Davis approached veneration, and not withstanding the total dissent we felt ... that respect was rather increased than diminished by what he had said."

The generals agreed that Confederate resources were exhausted and, "While the people were not panic-stricken," they were "broken down and worn out." Any attempt to continue the war would inflict more misery on the South.

Davis's face flushed, and he exclaimed, "Why then are you still in the field?" "We are here to help you escape," they answered. "Our men will risk battle for that, but they won't fire another shot to continue the war."²²

The President did not respond immediately. Instead he stared at his officers, his expression pained and accusatory, as if he had been betrayed by the last and most faithful. Recovering his poise, he spoke sharply with a bitter tone. "He would listen to no suggestion which regarded only his own safety." He then made an eloquent plea that appealed to "every sentiment and reminiscence that might be supposed to move a Southern soldier." He implored his generals to keep the faith and follow him, but there was no response, as the generals sat and looked at him in silence.

The blood drained from Davis's face, as if he realized now for the first time that the Confederacy was doomed. He put his head in his hands. "All is indeed lost," he sighed. "I see that the friends of the South are proposed to consent to her degradation." Davis arose from his chair and prepared to leave the parlor. When he staggered and nearly fell, Secretary of War Breckinridge stood up and assisted the President upstairs to his room.²³

While the exhausted and down-cast Davis rested, Breckinridge returned to the parlor. Addressing a grim audience, Breckinridge stated, "I will urge Mr. Davis to get out of the country without further delay." They promised to see that Davis escaped and agreed that Captain Campbell would continue to be his escort. Breckinridge would resume command of the five

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 123; James E. Walmsley, "The Last Meeting of the Confederate Cabinet," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* VI (Dec. 1919): 336-49.

²³ Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 765; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 123; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 520; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 118.

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cavalry brigades, which had been led by Bragg since crossing the Saluda, and they would march that night for Washington, Georgia. At Breckinridge's suggestion that they get some sleep, the generals and Colonel Breckinridge got up, filed out of the room, and, leaving the Burt House, returned to their quarters.²⁴

I. DAVIS SAYS GOODBYE TO THE BURTS AND RIDES ON

At 10 p.m. General Duke was aroused by Secretary Breckinridge, who asked him to take responsibility for guarding what remained of the Confederate treasury, as well as specie from some Richmond banks, then in railroad cars at the Abbeville depot. Breckinridge told Duke to requisition the necessary transportation and to detail 50 men under a reliable field officer for its protection. He further stated that there was between five and six hundred thousand dollars in specie--he did not know the exact sum--the greater part in gold. Duke protested that if no one knew what sum of money was there, it was an unwarranted "responsibility to impose on the officer who was to take charge of it," particularly because Duke would not have the opportunity to count the treasure, nor any means of ascertaining whether the entire sum had been turned over to him. Breckinridge replied that all of that had been considered, and told Duke to carry out his orders. Duke counted off 50 picked men as the guard, and placed them under Col. Theophilus Steele and four of the brigade's best junior officers. After securing six wagons and a corresponding number of teams, Duke and his Kentuckians, by lantern light, moved the hoard from boxcars, the money packed in shot bags, money belts, and boxes of diverse sizes (some "of the frailest description"). Duke's people transferred the money back into wagons for a return trip to Washington.

Captain Parker and his sailors and marines, after more than a month, were freed of their arduous guard duty. But before they claimed their discharge preparatory to starting for their homes, Parker demanded that they be paid. He was so insistent that he sent Paymaster John F. Wheless after the wagons, and impatiently waited in Abbeville for several days until Wheless returned from Washington with \$1,500 for the sailors and \$300 for the marines.²⁵

Word now came that Union cavalry was en route to Abbeville. It had already been determined that the command would move out at 11 p.m. While the five brigades were preparing to take the field, Breckinridge returned to the Burt House and awakened the President. Davis got up, dressed himself, and sent for his horse. Midnight was striking and a chilly rain was falling as the President rode out of Abbeville, turning into the Vienna road. Four cabinet members--Benjamin, Breckinridge, Mallory, and Reagan--and General Bragg traveled with the President and his escort. Davis's entourage still included Capt. Micajah Clark and Quartermaster Watson Van Benthuisen, commander of the elite guard responsible for the President's baggage, and the six Davis slaves. In one of Davis's two wagons were two heavy boxes containing \$35,000 in gold sovereigns.²⁶

²⁴ Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 765; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 520.

²⁵ Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 765; William H. Parker, *The Recollections of a Naval Officer, 1841-1865* (New York, 1883), pp. 363-66; John W. Harris, "Gold of the Confederate States of America," *Southern Historical Society Papers* XII (April 1904): 161.

²⁶ Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 125-27; Perrin, "Memories of Historic Old Abbeville, During the Between the States," *Abbeville Medium*, May 22, 1884; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 520. One of Colonel Perrin's daughters watched Judah Benjamin burn papers in the fireplace of her family home. Benjamin gave Colonel Perrin a "handsome inkstand, and presented Mrs. Perrin with a small box of loaf sugar and about five pounds of green tea in a small little tin box." Benjamin and Reagan entrusted their trunks to the Perrins. President Davis's staff burned the least valuable of the executive documents and left the rest in the care of Mrs. Leovy.

J. THE ESCORT DISBANDS AND THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CABINET GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS

The brigade commanders, in accordance with orders from Secretary Breckinridge, had, while at Abbeville, discharged those cavalymen desirous of returning to their homes. A thousand or more had taken advantage of this and had fallen out, slashing the strength of the cavalry column to about 1,500 officers and men. The wagons with \$251,000 in gold and silver, guarded now by General Duke and his people, rolled along with the rear guard. The treasure wagon had traveled one-half mile, when Lt. John B. Cole, one of the officers of the guard, rode up to Duke with a pine box which contained between two and three thousand dollars in gold on his saddle's pommel. Cole had remained after the others had left, and, in rummaging about one of the boxcars, had found the box stuck in the corner and covered up with gunny sacks.²⁷

A rapid gait was maintained and Secretary of State Benjamin, who was pleasantly plump, abandoned his buggy for the discomfort of riding a horse. Breckinridge rode alongside Davis for several miles, seeking to placate the President, who was still angry over the refusal of the brigade commanders to continue the fight. Breckinridge explained, in vain, that these officers had not lost their nerve. Their thought was to avoid the useless effusion of blood in a lost cause. He likewise sought to prevail on Davis that he must flee the country and give up all hope of reorganizing his forces. Breckinridge then reined up his steed and dropped back along the column to join Ferguson's rear guard. He would never see Davis again.²⁸

The caravan reached the Savannah River before daybreak, on May 3, crossed on the Vienna ponton bridge, and entered Georgia. Davis now lost another member of his Cabinet. Secretary of the Navy Mallory resigned, and on doing so exchanged letters with the President. Mallory pointed out that he wished to see to the protection of his family, who had fled Pensacola and were refugeeing in Georgia. He would, if Davis insisted, remain with him and guide him along the coast of the Florida panhandle, an area with which he was familiar. The President urged Mallory to think of his own welfare and, as they separated, Davis praised Mallory's "zeal, ability and integrity." Soon thereafter, Secretary of State Benjamin and the President went their separate ways. Pushing on, Davis, after a 40-mile ride, entered Washington on the morning of May 3.²⁹ The weather had cleared and the sun was shining. Seven days later, near Irwinville, Georgia, Davis's flight ended when he was surrounded and captured by Union cavalry. With him at that time were his wife and their family, Postmaster General Reagan, Burton Harrison, Col. William Preston Johnston, former Texas governor Francis R. Lubbock, and the six Davis slaves.

Meanwhile, Secretary Breckinridge, after assuring the President that he would rejoin him on the Georgia side of the Savannah River, had found himself confronted by a mutiny. Not far from the home of the Rev. Dionysius (Nish) Chenault, a 300-pound Methodist minister and planter, he found General Ferguson and the rear guard. Many of the horse soldiers were in a foul humor. Weapons had been thrown away and a number swore that in the morning they would surrender to

²⁷ Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 765; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 121.

²⁸ William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 520; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 121-22.

²⁹ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 122; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 128-29. Davis and his party, after crossing the Savannah, stopped to rest and have breakfast. Before eating, Davis sent a note to General Vaughn requesting that a cavalry detachment be ordered ahead to investigate reports of Union cavalry at Washington. Vaughn was uncertain whether General Johnston's surrender prevented him from sending his men on such a mission and referred the President's note to General Dibrell. The men had already been promised they could vote on surrendering, so Dibrell and Vaughn "concluded it would be wrong to force ... [them] into service again and notified Mr. Davis."

Benjamin, when he took leave of Davis, was accompanied by Henry Leovy to act as his interpreter, as Benjamin had assumed the disguise of a sightseeing Frenchman.

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the first Yankee encountered. Others cast covetous eyes on the six wagons carrying the \$250,000 in gold sovereigns. At every halt, disorderly horsemen congregated about the wagons. Duke and his guards became increasingly nervous. It was clear that the angry troops could overpower the handful of guards.³⁰

Breckinridge, after chatting briefly with General Ferguson, rode ahead and found the wagons stopped and surrounded by a mob of riotous horse soldiers. "We'll never get these wagons to Washington," a man exclaimed. The train contained specie while their own paper money was worthless. Why should they not take the gold and silver? The Secretary of War rode to the center of the mob, impressing at least one of those present that "Breckinridge in his native manhood was equal to the occasion." Wearing his familiar hunting jacket, he sat on his horse and addressed the crowd. "You're still Confederate soldiers," he said. "It's your responsibility to act the part." His face was a fierce bronze mask in the glare of pine knot torches.

You're Southern gentlemen, not highway robbers. On a hundred battlefields you have shown that you know how to face death like brave men. Now in these dark times, you must show that you can also live honorably.

As soon as they reached Washington, he said, they would be paid from the treasure train. The cavalry was not persuaded. They must have their pay now, while it could be had, they clamored. There was no certainty of reaching Washington, with the enemy rapidly closing in.³¹

Breckinridge gave in, remarking, "If you want me to make good on my promise immediately, I'll do it." The wagons were parked near a house on the South Carolina side of the Savannah. Boxes were stove in as a circle of watchful veterans crowded about the wagons at dawn's first light. The brigade quartermasters spent most of May 3 counting out the money. "The sight of so much money seemed to banish sleep." Paying the escort took all day. General Duke reported that his "brigade received thirty-two dollars *per capita*, officers and men sharing alike. General Breckinridge was paid that sum, and, for the purpose was borne on the rolls of the brigade."³²

Even paying the men did not ease the situation in several units, causing Breckinridge to lament, "Nothing can be done with the bulk of this command." Vaughn and Dibrell with their brigades were resolved to remain where they were unless given a preemptory order to move on, so Breckinridge told them to stay. Duke, Ferguson, and W.C.P. Breckinridge were made of sterner stuff and told the Secretary that they were prepared to follow him to Mexico if he wished. When the troops were paid, the remainder of the specie was loaded back into one of the wagons. By then it was past daybreak on May 4, and Breckinridge ordered Ferguson to cross the Savannah and march on to Washington. Then, after saying goodbye to Vaughn and Dibrell, the Secretary followed with Duke's command. By the time they approached Washington it was late afternoon and they learned that President Davis and a small party had left several hours before headed deeper into Georgia. Whereupon, Breckinridge had Duke pitch camp just outside of town, on both sides of the road. Duke then turned the remainder of the treasure over to Captain Clark, who assumed the mantle of acting Treasurer of the Confederate States of America. Duke did this with a great sense of relief.³³

³⁰ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 122; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 521.

³¹ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 122-23; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, p. 128; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 521.

³² Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 766; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, p. 521; Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, pp. 123-24.

³³ Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, p. 124; Ballard, *A Long Shadow*, pp. 131-32; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge*, pp. 521-22; Duke, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Battles and Leaders*, IV: 766.

K. THE AFTERMATH--THE PRINCIPALS GO THEIR WAYS

In the 34 hours between their 11 p.m., May 2, departure from Abbeville and when President Davis rode out of Washington, Georgia, at midmorning on May 4, the principals in the dramatic council of war and other key individuals associated with it, in accordance with the decision reached there, went their separate ways. Postmaster General Reagan was with Davis, when they were captured near Irwinville, Georgia, on Wednesday, May 10. Davis, upon his capture, was taken to Fort Monroe, Virginia, where he was imprisoned. For the first week he was shackled in a cell, but, became of public opinion, conditions improved and by autumn his family was allowed to be with him. He was released on May 13, 1867, and soon became the premier symbol of the "Lost Cause." He died in New Orleans, in December 1889. Reagan, after being released from prison at Fort Warren, Massachusetts, returned to Texas. In 1875 he actively reentered politics and was elected to the House of Representatives, where he served until his 1887 election to the U.S. Senate, where he held office until 1891. He died in 1905.

Judah Benjamin, who parted company with Davis at Washington, Georgia, escaped to Great Britain by way of the West Indies. There he built a new career as a distinguished member of the English bar. He died in Paris, France, in 1884. Stephen Mallory, who had resigned as Secretary of the Navy at Abbeville on May 2 and handed the papers to Davis the next day at Washington, traveled to La Grange, Georgia, where his family had refugeed. He was arrested there and held at Fort LaFayette, in New York Harbor, until March 11, 1866. He then returned to his pre-war home in Pensacola, Florida, and resumed his law practice until his death in 1873.

Secretary of War Breckinridge, like Benjamin, escaped abroad, reaching Canada by way of Cuba and Europe. He returned from exile to his Lexington, Kentucky, home in 1869. He resumed his law practice and became a leader in the development and expansion of Kentucky railroads. He died in Lexington in 1875.

General Bragg surrendered to members of Maj. Gen. George Stoneman's command on May 10 and was paroled. His first post-bellum employment was as chief engineer for the state of Alabama. He subsequently moved to Galveston, Texas, where he dropped dead of a heart attack on September 27, 1876. General Dibrell was paroled at Washington, Georgia, May 9, 1865. After the war he became a merchant and financier. He represented the Third District of Tennessee in the U.S. Congress from 1874-1884. He also was president of the Southwestern Railroad and was instrumental in the development of the Bon Air coal mines. Dibrell died at Sparta, Tennessee, May 9, 1888.

Basil Duke, subsequent to the war, enjoyed a distinguished career as an attorney, legislator, author, and editor. His *Reminiscences* and *Morgan's Cavalry* rank as charming and reliable histories of the era. He was one of three commissioners of Shiloh National Military Park, serving in that role from 1895 until his death in New York City, September 16, 1916. General Vaughn, paroled at Washington, May 9, 1865, lived out the remainder of his life alternately in Brooks County, Georgia, and in Monroe County, Tennessee. He served one term as presiding officer of the Tennessee senate. He died near Thomasville, Georgia, September 10, 1875. Col. W.P.C. Breckinridge, after his parole, returned to Lexington, Kentucky, and resumed his law practice. He, in 1869, became a newspaperman serving as editor of the *Lexington Observer and Reporter* (1866-68) and chief editorial writer for the *Lexington Morning Herald* from 1897 until his death in 1904.

General Ferguson had another 52 years to live, making his home for most of this time in Greenville, Mississippi, where he read law and was admitted to the bar. He was president of the board of Mississippi levee commissioners. He was named to the Mississippi River Commission in 1885 by President Chester A. Arthur. He died in Jackson, Mississippi, February 3, 1917.

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BURT-STARK MANSION

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other: Specify Repository: Abbeville County Historic Preservation Commission

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 3½ acres

No UTM's. The latitude and longitude of the Burt-Stark Mansion are:

N 34° 10' 51 7/8"
W 82° 22' 58 1/2"

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that certain piece, parcel and lot of land, situate, lying and being at the intersection of North Main Street and Greenville Street, in the City of Abbeville, Abbeville County, South Carolina, containing three (3) Acres, more or less, and being bounded now or formerly as follows: Bounded on the Northwest by lands of Maria L. Neuffer, A.M. Neuffer, and Sarah N. Price; bounded on the Northeast by lands of Dr. George V. Rosenberg, and possibly others; bounded on the Southeast by Greenville Street; and bounded on the Southwest by North Main Street; which premises were the former residence of Mrs. Fannie S. Conner, deceased.

Boundary Justification:

Included within the boundary are the house and grounds owned and maintained since 1900 by James Samuel Stark and his family and conveyed to the Abbeville County Historic Preservation Commission in 1971.

BURT-STARK MANSION

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian
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Date: April 28, 1992
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